DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 061 596 24 EA 004 181

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TITLE Organizational Development from the Inside: A Progress Report on the First Cadre of Organizational Specialists.
INSTITUTION Oregon Univ., Eugene. Center for Advanced Study of Educational Administration.
SPONS AGENCY National Center for Educational Research and Development (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO TR-12
BUREAU NO BR-5-0217
PUB DATE Apr 72
CONTRACT OEC-4-10-163
NOTE 22p.; Abridged from: Organizational Specialists in a School District: A Follow-up Study. M.A. Thesis, September 1971

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; Communication Skills; Educational Administration; Educational Innovation; *Group Dynamics; *Organization; *Organizational Change; Organizational Climate; Problem Solving; *Program Evaluation; School Organization

ABSTRACT

This document reports the experiences of organizational development specialists and compares organizational development with two other change strategies. Organizational development aims to increase the effectiveness of task groups in schools by teaching them how to communicate clearly, use systematic methods to solve problems, draw out and use group members' information and resources, and to build new norms and roles that support group processes. Organizational specialists in Kent, Washington, met with many difficulties because of budget and personnel constraints, but they did succeed in improving the communication and problemsolving skills of district subsystems. When compared with innovative team and change agent team strategies, the organizational development strategy was the only one that could claim specific, longrange improvements in the school systems. (RA)

ED 061596

April, 1972

Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration

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Organizational Development from the Inside: A Progress Report on the First Cadre of Organizational Specialists

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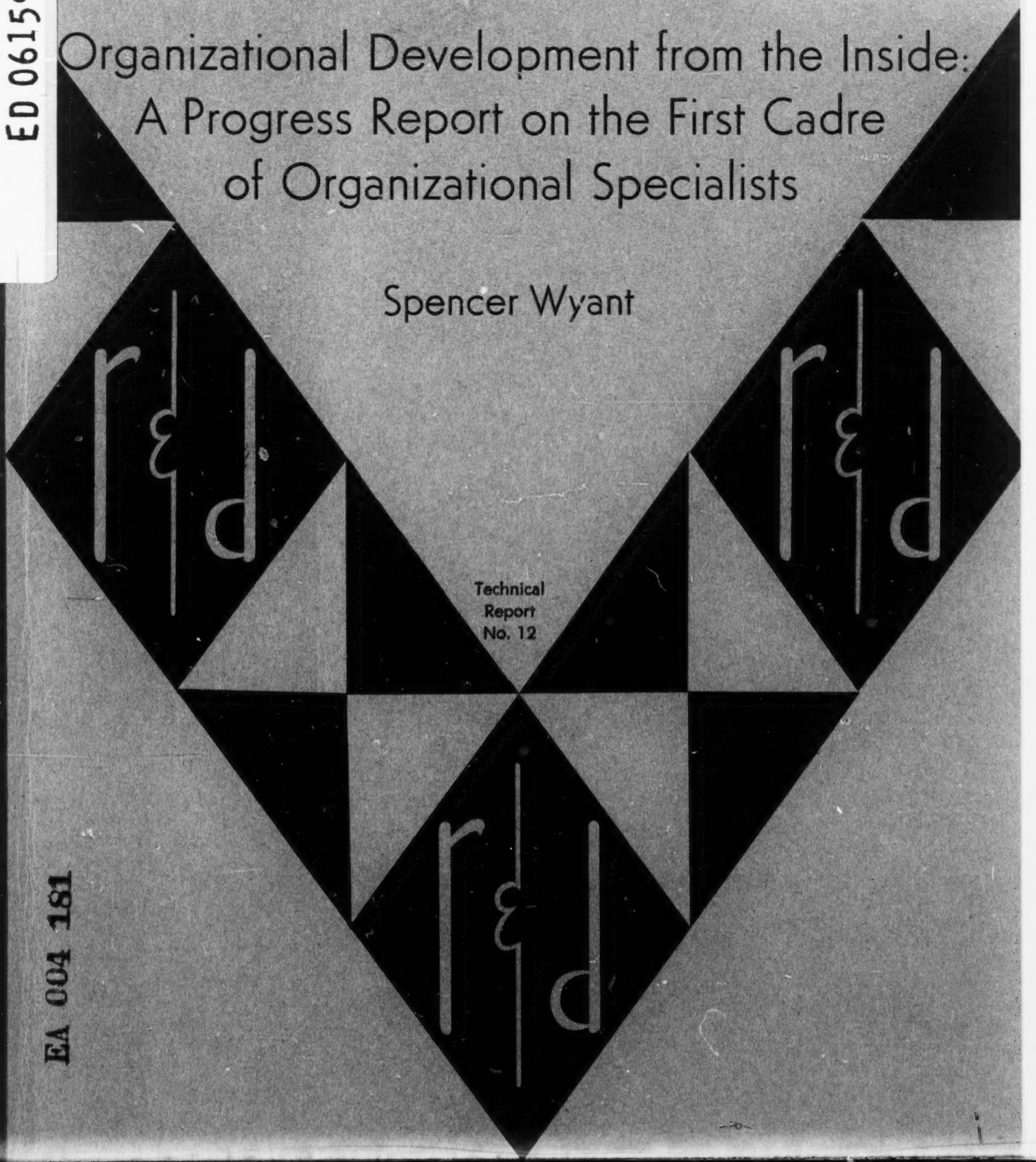

Technical Report No. 12

EA 004 181

ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FROM THE INSIDE: A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE FIRST CADRE OF ORGANIZATIONAL SPECIALISTS

Abridged from:

"Organizational Specialists in a School District: A Follow-up Study."
M.A. Thesis, University of Oregon, September, 1971.

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Bureau No. 5-0217, Project No. 3001

Contract No. 4-10-163

Funding Authority: Cooperative Research Act

April 1972

The research reported herein was conducted as part of the research and development program of the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, a national research and development center supported in part by funds from the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the Office of Education and no official endorsement by the Office of Education should be inferred.

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School districts exist in uncertain environments and must develop a capacity for adaptive change to become responsive, effective organizations. School districts can improve their capacity for adaptive change by creating cadres of organizational specialists to provide continuous training in organizational development.

Program 30, "Strategies of Organizational Change," of the Center for the Advanced Study of Educational Administration, helped create a cadre of organizational specialists in the Kent, Washington, school district as part of a major project in organizational development during 1968-70. This report will describe the cadre's activities and development since our part in the project ended.* The Kent specialists will be compared with two other teams within school systems that were given the task of changing the organization. We will, first, however, briefly describe our theoretical perspective on school districts and their environments, the strategy of organizational development, and what we mean by subsystems designed to promote organizational change.

environments of school organizations

A school district's environment is its community and society and all those individuals, groups, and organizations with which it has contact. School districts must depend on segments of their environments for resources, and they must also respond to demands placed on them by segments of the environment. The problem is that the demands are many, competing, and constantly changing, and the supply of needed resources is far from reliable. Taxpayers veto proposed budgets while employee groups demand pay increases; racial crises erupt while courts lay down new busing requirements; federal agencies offer funds for specific programs while special-interest groups object to certain curricula; and so on. The demands tomorrow will be different from those today, but we cannot say what they will be.

The result is that events outside the district often dictate what it may or must do, but the district cannot guess in advance what those events will be. In consequence, once-useful practices become obsolete. Further, many long-range plans committing the district to particular organizational structures or practices also become obsolete in a very short time. That is, school districts have difficulty in coping with changing environmental demands, as does any large organization. Some of the difficulties seem to be particularly acute in educational institutions. Powerful myths support even obsolete practices; legal constraints reduce the freedom to innovate; norms in school staffs promote autonomy and conservatism; and school organizations often do not sense the need for change until a crisis strikes.

strategy of organizatitional development

Our strategy for changing schools

*The initial stages of the project are described in Technical Report No. 11, Schmuck, Runkel, and Blondino (1970). That report describes the training conducted by CASEA for Kent personnel and the establishment and training of the organizational specialists.

proceeds from the above view of the kinds of problems schools must face. Our general goal is to help school organizations become adaptive, self-renewing systems that can change their way of doing things rapidly to cope with environmental stresses. The adaptive school organization can set specific goals; it can use the innovative enterprise of its members to help make decisions about reaching goals; it can act on those decisions; it can constantly monitor its own functioning to mark progress (or the lack of it) toward the goals; and it can begin new cycles of adaptive action as needed.

Our strategy is to increase the effectiveness of task groups in schools by teaching them how to communicate clearly, use systematic methods to solve problems, draw out and use group members' information and resources, and to build new norms and roles that support effective group processes. Building on these basic skills, groups and organizations can then set in motion those processes that mark the self-renewing school. Our method is laboratory training, a mode of experiential learning that engages members of task groups in practicing new skills of communication, new ways of making decisions, new methods for solving problems, and new patterns of interaction.

Because we believe that the need for organizational change will persist, we also believe that the need for organizational training will persist. A subsystem of organizational specialists within a school district can be continuously available to meet this need.

subsystems for organizational change

The use of subsystems to recommend, carry out, or stimulate change in schools is not new. Curriculum specialists create new instructional packages, task forces try to solve specific problems, change-agent teams encourage innovative practices, and so on. These subsystems, in a depressing number of cases, have failed to make long-lasting changes. The failure may not be due to inadequacies in the subsystems' prescriptions or products. The subsystem may be isolated, so that it does not have an effective way to influence other members of the organization. The organization itself may not respond to the subsystem's input, and consequently may be unable or unwilling to integrate new procedures or ideas into its working routine.

We are suggesting that the solution to any given problem, or the adoption of any new practice, usually requires the organization to change itself in some way. We also suggest that an innovative or change-agent subsystem will have very limited impact unless it is perceived by others as a legitimate, effective instrument of the organization's intention to change itself. Finally, we suggest that it is not enough to have good ideas for innovation or elegant solutions for problems; real change comes only when people learn new ways of behaving that support a new way of doing things.

a descriptive scheme

We present here a descriptive scheme organized around six questions that we feel should be asked about any attempt to use a subsystem to change the organization: (1) who initiates the attempt, and what is their goal; (2) what is the role of the subsystem; (3) what criteria are used to select members of the subsystem; (4) what training is given the subsystem; (5) what actions does the subsystem take to promote or make changes; and (6) what significant changes in the system can we attribute to the subsystem's efforts? These questions will guide our description of the Kent project, and will allow us to compare that project with two other projects in using subsystems to facilitate change.

Section 2

THE KENT PROJECT

CASEA's project in Kent grew out of the district's response to its recent rapid growth. Thousands of new employees of the nearby Boeing aerospace complex moved their families to Kent during the 1960s, raising the district's enrollment from 5,506 in 1960 to 9,434 in 1966; it was to reach 13,335 by 1971. Despite this growth, the district's top administration in 1966 still consisted of the superintendent and two assistants.

A management consulting firm hired by the school board in 1966 found that roles and responsibilities in the district's administration were confused, curriculum development was haphazard, and certain other administrative functions were poorly handled. The consultants foresaw continued growth, with enrollment doubling by 1975. They recommended reorganization of the administration and gradual expansion of the administrative and instructional staff to about twice the current size. Four new assistant-superintendent-level administrators were hired, and the teaching staff was expanded.

When carried out, the recommended steps to increase the administrative and instructional staff actually brought further confusion of roles and exacerbated the problems of communication both within the superintendent's staff and between his staff and the schools. In addition, the instructional staff seemed to resent the consultants' recommendations to spend so much of the budget on the central office instead of the school and the classroom. The district remained plagued by the problems that the firm's recommendations were supposed to solve.

A junior high school counselor approached CASEA in August, 1967, with the information that the district's administrators would be willing to discuss a project to improve skills in communication. Subsequent negotiations resulted in a plan for collaboration that would last over two years and potentially involve all the district's personnel.

Our goal was to increase the district's ability to solve problems and respond adaptively to demands for change. The period of entry lasted for seven months, as we tried to gain approval from every level of the professional hierarchy. We then carried out training events for line and staff administrators and for selected school staffs from April, 1968, to May, 1969. See Schmuck, Runkel, and Blondino (1970) for a description of these events.

As part of the original agreement between CASEA and the district, the administration established and supported a cadre of organizational specialists to train school staffs and other groups in the skills of communication and problem solving. This cadre was to carry on the organizational development functions in the district after CASEA withdrew. We solicited applications in Spring, 1969, and hoped that cadre members would come from all parts and levels of the district. The initial members included five central-office administrators and eighteen teachers, counselors, and building administrators. Eight of the district's 22 schools were represented.

The first and major training event for the cadre was a two-week workshop in June, 1969. The first week was devoted to teambuilding and to learning the skills of communication, problem solving, and intervening. During the second week, the specialists formed six teams; these teams selected target groups for the first interventions, gathered diagnostic data, and began

designing the interventions.

During the next nine months, the consultants and their CASEA trainers carried out four major projects. Three were considered successful. The CASEA trainers also conducted periodic follow-up sessions for the specialists. According to contract, CASEA withdrew from active involvement with the district in March, 1970.

Between March, 1970, and May, 1971, the specialists conducted training events for the staffs of eight Kent schools and for two administrative groups, gave consultation on group processes to several subsystems, and conducted inservice courses in communication. They also gave organizational training to groups outside the district. The cadre's coordinator has estimated that 350 persons, in and out of the district, were trained by specialists between June, 1970, and May, 1971.

The following description of the cadre's work is organized by the type of client: school staffs, other district subsystems, individuals, and groups outside the district. Representative events will be described and others will be briefly mentioned.

Five of the eight school staffs trained were moving toward new organizational structures, one faced a severe problem of morale, and two wanted generally to improve their interaction. Staff members and specialists interviewed by the author and others generally have rated these events as successful and productive. In some cases, the staffs had previously experienced CASEA's training. In two schools, the specialists could build on the staff's favorable reaction to previous CASEA training, while in two others they had to overcome resentment left by our interventions.

Springbrook Elementary, a school with team teaching, has experienced successful organizational training since August, 1969. Several factors contribute to the staff's readiness to use organizational skills: the new building, with few walls, encourages flexibility and innovation; the principal has been trained as a specialist; and teachers help the principal select the specialists who will train them. The initial training, a two-day workshop, was spent in learning communication skills and in group problem solving to make plans to handle organizational problems that might arise during the coming year. The specialists returned to conduct three half-day interventions during September, October, and November. In August, 1970, three specialists conducted a two-day intervention that included a review of communication skills, exercises on giving and receiving constructive feedback, group cooperation, and systematic group problem solving. Staff members later reported that the specialists conducted a well-designed and executed event, that the specialists effectively used the skills they taught, that the staff's communication was clear, and that teaching teams were working well together.

The training at Springbrook exemplifies the cadre's intervention strategy for schools. Typically, summer workshops are supplemented by short events during the school year. The specialists' interventions usually included exercises in communication skills and problem-solving procedures. Additional components of any given training event are chosen to meet the needs of the individual school staff.

Two new "open concept" elementary schools, Grass Lake and Soos Creek, received training during several half-day sessions in August, 1970. These workshops focused on the needs of new groups to establish norms of open communication and clear expectations of goals, roles, and decision making. When the Soos Creek staff encountered difficulty in applying problem-solving procedures to situations they were yet to face, the specialists changed the workshop into a task session in which they gave process consultation to groups. The specialists returned later to lead the staff in problem solving; they reported that problems had been solved but communication skills had been little used. The Grass Lake staff twice had the specialists observe faculty meetings and give participants feedback.

The staff of Fairwood Elementary, despite an unfavorable reaction to our previous training at the school, asked for two days' training in August, 1970. The specialists briefly reviewed communication skills and devoted most of the event to clarifying roles and norms, practice in decision making in teaching teams, and

identifying individuals' resources. The staff members interviewed said that the cadre's intervention was more successful than CASEA's chiefly because the staff had asked for the cadre's help, whereas they had seen CASEA's event as imposed on them.

Work with East Hill Elementary, one of the most satisfying interventions by the cadre, began in Spring, 1970, when the new principal learned that more than a dozen teachers planned to resign or transfer. A specialist interviewed him and others and used this information to give the staff feedback that helped reduce tensions by clarifying the principal's intentions and the staff's perception of his actions. The specialists then conducted a two-day intervention in August, 1970, and several staff members took the cadre's inservice course. Specialists observed faculty meetings, interviewed staff members, and reported the data to the staff later that fall. The workshop was rated as successful by trainers and staff, requests for transfer dropped dramatically, and morale improved. It should be noted that a significant drop in enrollment and the transfer of a few teachers who opposed the principal must surely account for part of the improvement.

Additionally, Sequoia Junior High had a specialist conduct three after-school training sessions in May, 1970; Cedar Valley Elementary received training in March and another day in August, 1970; and Meridian Elementary had two day's training in August, 1970. These events, as those above, focused on improving group processes with exercises in communication and problem solving.

As we said, these interventions were all considered productive, though the degree of success varied. Eight of the nine school staff members we interviewed said they would again request the cadre's services; the ninth said he would "if we were starting up again, but (it is) not necessary now because we can deal with problems." Further, interviewees were able, several months after the training, to point to specific effects of the training that persisted in their staff's interaction, such as the "fishbowl" discussion procedure in faculty meetings, the use of communication skills by staff members, and application of problem-solving procedures to school issues.

The superintendent's cabinet, the curriculum development department, and the local education association have used the cadre's services. In January, 1970, the superintendent started a continuing collaboration between his staff and the cadre. Specialists began by observing the staff's meetings and reporting their observations to the participants. They then helped the superintendent design a radically new form for the meetings that invited wider participation by representatives of important groups in the district and also helped to reduce mistrust of the administrators' proceedings.

Specialists conducted a week-long training session for the cabinet in July, 1970, to build skills in communication, sharing feedback, and group problem solving. Specialists regularly observed school board meetings and debriefed them with the cabinet. Two specialists observed group processes during a budget hearing for the district's staff and reported their observations to participants at the end of the meeting. The specialists and the cabinet held a joint meeting in December, 1970, to assess communication and morale in the district and to offer the cadre's help in improving both. When interviewed, the superintendent said that training by the cadre for his staff had increased his staff's cohesiveness, skill in communicating, and ability to work through interpersonal conflicts.

Two specialists gave process consultation to the Curriculum Development Division during a week-long working retreat in July, 1970. The division's director, himself a specialist, said later that the event had been successful; but the consultants felt that their services had not been much used.

Leaders of the Kent Education Association asked the cadre to train its 50-member representative council. Lacking the personnel to do so, the specialists began observing the council's meetings in January, 1971, and debriefing them with association officials. Since then, the specialists have led KEA groups in problem-solving sessions and have helped the association confront inter-group conflicts among its governing bodies. The cadre's collaboration with the association has recently become one of the specialists' major efforts.

A three-phase inservice course in interpersonal relations and group processes offered by the cadre is accredited by a state college. This course serves several important organizational functions: it builds individual communicative skills, introduces people in all parts of the district to the specialists' style of organizational training, creates interest in the cadre's work with task groups, and brings new members into the cadre.

Basic concepts and skills, group decision making, and problem solving are covered in the first phase, in four weekly sessions. More skill practice, exercises in group processes, and the classroom applications of organizational training are covered in the second phase, in ten weekly meetings. The third phase is designed for prospective cadre members and covers the intervening skills of the organizational specialist. Participants who complete the second course may work with the cadre as observers during interventions; those completing the third can become trainers after acquiring some co-training experience. Several dozen persons have taken one or more phases of the course (an average of 30 persons register each time a phase has been offered), and several persons have come into the cadre in this way. The courses have attracted not only certificated staff, but also secretaries and parents.

Specialists have conducted several training events for groups that represent important segments of the district's environment: students, community groups, governmental agencies, etc. Perhaps the most exciting of these have been the multi-ethnic camps for students. These camps were begun as an individual effort by one specialist, and soon were adopted as an official project of the cadre. More than 200 students from Kent and nearby districts have participated in the three weekend camps held to date. The students encounter and interact with young people of other races in "rap sessions," structured exercises, and small-group activities that explore racial prejudice and interpersonal communication. Evaluation by participants has been enthusiastically positive, and the camps are now supported by funds from the state education department.

The specialists have carried organizational training to several groups outside the district. Two specialists and a local PTA leader convened 24 elementary principals and PTA presidents for problem-solving exercises to promote home-and-school cooperation. Two elementary schools, one in a neighboring district and one in Eastern Washington, each contracted for two days' organizational training by cadre members. Three specialists gave a short demonstration in organizational training to a conference of Seattle-area principals. Other specialists have taught communication skills to a Model Cities Council, to participants in a work study program leading to teaching careers for low-income people, and to leaders of the state League of Women Voters.

The data we have collected so far consistently point to a successful outcome of our project. We shall have more definite results in hand, and data to check against our specific hypotheses, after we have analyzed the thousands of questionnaires administered over a five-year span in Kent and in two control districts. At this point, we can say that the specialists' activities and the effects of their work are, in many ways, similar to those we look for in self-renewing organizations.

The interventions in schools all dealt with skills we presume necessary to self renewal: they all included exercises in communication and problem solving, two focused on setting specified goals, and two included activities to draw out individual resources useful in the group's task. Our interviews indicate that the use of problem-solving procedures and communication skills, and attention to interpersonal relations and group processes, are actively maintained in several schools.

Some larger-scale outcomes seem to indicate movement toward a self-renewing district. The continued collaboration of the cadre and the superintendent's cabinet, especially through the new format of cabinet meetings, indicates an ability to make and maintain structural changes that promote coordination of subsystems and an increased flow of useful information. The observation and debriefing of meetings by specialists is an important feedback mechanism for continued attention to group processes. The work with groups other than the Kent staff helps link the district to important segments of its environment. The communications courses help diffuse needed skills throughout the district. A specific example of diffusion occurred in July, 1970, when two elementary principals who had taken two phases

of the course led a principals' association workshop in a two-hour review of communication skills and decision making. The multi-ethnic camp seems to be a creative way to help students understand others, and it occurs outside the traditional boundaries of classroom walls.

Whether the specialists will have a long-term positive effect on the district is still an open question, though many signs we have seen encourage our hopes. The specialists and the district faced a period of crisis and trauma as our contract with them expired early in 1970. We will describe this troubled period in the next section.

Section 3

THE WAY IT LOOKS NOW

We describe here those factors in the Kent district's environment, in the district itself, and in the cadre, that seem to facilitate the district's movement toward a capacity for self-renewal, and those which seem to restrain that movement. We wish that we could confidently predict that the beneficial influence of the organizational specialists will continue to grow and that the Kent district will gradually increase its ability to respond to environmental stresses. But organizational life is never simple enough to permit unqualified optimism. In fact, Kent has recently experienced several strains that have strenuously hindered the fledgling cadre and constrained the district's ability to take flexible, innovative action. Other recent developments, though, seem encouraging. The following discussion is a kind of "balance sheet" of those signs that give us hope and those that discourage us.

forces in the environment

Restraining forces in the environment reached crisis proportions early in 1970, when a big budget deficit coincided with the start of a severe economic recession in the Kent-Seattle area. The district was discovered to have a deficit of $1.85 million, in a budget of approximately $12 million, due to a series of administrative errors in budget preparation over several years. Meanwhile, booming Boeing suddenly went into a tailspin and dragged the entire region's economy down with it. The company reduced its work force from a 1968 high of 102,000 to 44,000 by April, 1971; a further decline to 29,500 during 1971 was expected, according to Time (April 5, 1971, page 76). The company's suppliers, and retail merchants that served its employees, saw their own revenues decline drastically, and laid off employees accordingly. Unemployment in the Seattle area has reached as high as 15 per cent of the work force.

Washington voters, in November, 1970, rejected a proposed state income tax, a measure sponsored by the state education association and others chiefly to generate revenue for schools. The financial support provided by the state legislature continued its decline of recent years, and local tax collections have been below expectations.

After the budget deficit was discovered, certificated staff in Kent were cut from 718 to 620, despite an expected increase of 1,200 pupils. The number of assistant superintendents was reduced to four, half the number recommended in 1966-67 by the management consultants. The district eliminated plans to improve libraries, reduced positions for teacher aides, cut business and other services, put off buying equipment and supplied, and eliminated most inservice training as well as most extended contracts for teachers.

Voters overwhelmingly rejected a special levy submitted to cover the deficit (and a building bond issue on the same ballot), and the district began to "borrow" from its 1971-72 budget to meet the shortage. Some school patrons started recall proceedings against some school board members. Some professional staff sued the district to recover jobs or extra-salary "point factors" that had been cut. The new assistant superintendents left the district rather than accept classroom teacher contracts, and the business manager resigned. The education association publicly attacked the district's administration and its handling of finances. In short, the world around the district seemed to be a dismal swamp full of unpleasant surprises; yet the new cadre continued to function.

In part, the stability of the cadre has been strengthened by support from persons and groups outside the district. The cadre has the support of the influential local ministers' association. The state education department, where the cadre's original coordinator now works, funds the multi-ethnic camp and can offer other resources. Central Washington State College accredits the cadre's inservice course and has provided an instructor for the third phase; the college's education department has called on cadre members to help train groups outside the district. Finally, the state education association is actively involved in group-process training; one of its staff members regularly conducts workshops for the cadre's own professional development.

forces in the district

The specialists we interviewed saw the interest and enthusiasm of people who had taken the inservice course or who have received training in school interventions as the main facilitating force in the district; this support seems to be greater among elementary than secondary staffs. The cadre is gaining some support from the local education association; it recently elected a specialist as its president-elect. Some specialists also felt they were supported by some of the district's top officials.

The chief restraints on the cadre were seen as problems due to the budget crisis, the lack of more vigorous support from the top administration, and disparaging attitudes or outright hostility from some of the district personnel.

Lack of funds forced cancellation of requests for training from the district's elementary counselors and from the principals' association, and the cadre had to turn down a request from a high school counselor to start a project to enlist parents in preventing dropouts. Money originally committed by the district to release time for the specialists has been cut, and specialists now work for the cadre on their own time.

Cadre members are ambivalent about the district's top administration; it is not seen as actively opposing the cadre, but its active and united support is sorely missed. One specialist, though optimistic about the support of the central office staff, felt they existed in a "dreamlike unawareness of what's happening at the grass roots level."

Attitudes of the district's personnel are seen by specialists and others as part of a climate marked by job insecurity, mistrust, fear, and hostility. As individual work loads have increased, time that might be devoted to organizational training becomes scarce, and people are less willing to risk trying something new. The principal of one staff trained by specialists said he "questioned" the "continual breakdown" between the central office and schools, a situation described by a counselor as "hostility between the head shed and the peasants."

In contrast, the superintendent said when interviewed that the cadre had "changed things" and "brought insight into interaction." He specifically mentioned the cadre's work with the school board, the inservice course, and the multi-ethnic camps; and he felt the cadre's influence could be seen in the staff's unity that helped pass two recent special levies. He foresaw a continuing need for the specialists' services and thought that interest in the cadre was growing among teachers. As restraints he noted the resistance by some specialists' supervisors to time given to cadre tasks, the fact that some influential district personnel had not supported the cadre, and the "human tendency (jealousy) to view the cadre as separated out and different."

forces in the cadre

The continued existence of the cadre despite the district's financial problems is itself heartening. We are also encouraged by the commitment and cohesion of the active specialists and by the procedures developed by the cadre to govern and renew itself.

A coordinator and a steering committee on which all active members serve periodically give the cadre a governing body and a formal channel of communication with the administration and other district groups. The cadre has developed policies for responding to requests for training, for replacing members who drop out, for forming teams for interventions, and for the various ways cadre members can contribute to its work.

Graduates of the communication courses become eligible for cadre membership after they have some experience co-training with a specialist. In May, 1971, three graduates who had high recommendations from co-trainers and clients were accepted into the cadre. Three others needed only some experience to become members, including one man who was not a district employee but an interested parent! The course graduates, a former CASEA assistant who took a job in the district and the 12-15 original specialists who are still active bring the cadre's normal strength to approximately its original size.

The specialists have held several workshops conducted by Donald Murray, an NTL Associate and a staff member of the Washington Education Association, to refurbish their own group processes and to extend their professional skills. In October of 1970, Murray led an all-day workshop to clarify cadre goals and future activities. A second all-day workshop in May of 1971, focused on the current status and future direction of the cadre. Additionally, Murray has conducted several after-school sessions for the specialists to introduce them to new exercises and techniques for interventions.

Some internal restraints felt by the specialists are by-products of the budget crisis. The specialists generally feel pressured by time and their individual workloads. Their inability to hold more frequent general meetings makes it difficult to maintain the group's cohesion. Several specialists felt deserted by those who have dropped out, suggesting that some people applied for training more for personal benefit than to become effective specialists. A few specialists expressed frustration at what they saw as the cadre's limited impact on the district and at the uncertainty of the cadre's future.

prognosis

We have seen that the cadre has productively intervened in several parts and levels of the district and that it continues to carry on organizational development functions in Kent. However, the district's poor financial situation and the resulting low morale among its personnel are potent restraints to further development. One specialist summarized the group's attitude as mixed hope, frustration, and determination to carry on despite the constraints.

Further changes have taken place as the 1971-72 school year starts. The superintendent resigned, to become a deputy superintendent for the year before he retires. He will be the cadre's official coordinator, and his budget includes some funds for "all communications as the Superintendent decides." The new superintendent is still an unknown factor. He has established a community council for each school, and is said to be interested in the cadre's top priority project, a weekend workshop for about 100 students, professional staff, and community persons, scheduled for Fall, 1971. No released time or direct financial support is now directly committed to the cadre, though they remain an "official but unfunded" program of the district.

Section 4

TWO OTHER CHANGE STRATEGIES

In this section we compare our strategy in Kent with those of two other recent projects in which subsystems were expected to improve the innovative capacities of school systems. The strategies are similar in that in each (1) an outside agency and a school system joined in a lengthy project to improve the system, (2) a subsystem received laboratory training from outside consultants, (3) the goal was generally to raise the system's ability to do things in new ways. However, the projects differ in each of the six aspects we mentioned in section one: the outside agency's entry into the system, the role and function of the subsystem, selection of the subsystem's members, training of the subsystem's members, interventions conducted, and results of the project.

internal teams for innovation

The first project, as described by Wolfe (1969), was a seventeen-month effort conducted by the Institute of Advanced Studies for Teachers of Disadvantaged Youth. Teams of faculty members in six poverty-area junior high schools were formed to introduce particular innovative practices and to improve the schools' ability to manage change.

The institute staff designed the project and then invited participation by schools in a large Mid-Western city and its suburbs. After the six schools were selected, faculty members in each were invited to apply for team membership. Each team of five or six members was to create a plan for improving its school's innovativeness and then to make the plan work during the 1968-69 school year. The Institute's criteria for team members were: influential position, several years' experience, recommendations from colleagues, evidence of concern for helping disadvantaged youth, personal attributes as judged by the consultants, and academic competence as shown by college transcripts.

The Institute's theory described effective innovative subsystems as groups with (1) positive interpersonal norms, interdependence, and commitment to reaching shared goals through problem solving; (2) task competence based on increased individual resources and the team's ability to apply the concepts and skills of action research, system diagnosis, and group problem solving to innovation and change; and (3) effective channels of communication and influence to other individuals and groups in the parent system.

The teams' training was divided into three phases. First, trainees attended a one-week T-group to develop interpersonal skills and team cohesion. Second, they attended the Institute's six-week summer workshop to study minority-group cultures, new uses of audio-visual techniques, and the problems of educating disadvantaged youth. During the workshop, trainees also met with leaders of the school's community, and prepared a documentary film of the community in cooperation with students. Third, each team met with another and with its consultant periodically during the 1968-69 year.

Each team produced a plan, based on diagnosis of the school's problems and its environment, that stated both the needs the team realistically could try to meet and also a set of actions the team intended to carry out to meet these needs. No systematic data were reported on outcomes of the project in Wolfe's study, but his narrative seems to support his conclusion that, while some teams did introduce certain innovations, no team really became a highly effective agent of

change.

The most effective team, in a suburban parochial school, built on its members' past experience with innovative programs. However, its efforts to improve faculty communication, to involve parents, and to strengthen student leadership were set aside in mid-year when a financial crisis struck and the staff's energy focused on simply keeping the school open.

At a second school, the team could not resolve interpersonal conflicts, and its impact seemed to be due to the efforts of one dynamic team member. Plans to increase faculty unity, to increase involvement of students and parents, and to improve the curriculum were begun with some success; but the Institute consultants felt that the team's accomplishments fell far short of the school's potential.

At another school, a ghetto school already embarked on several innovative programs, the team seemed to its consultants passive and unambitious. The team never successfully involved other staff members. An orientation program for new teachers was started, but the team failed to carry out its intended collaboration on other projects with an existing faculty planning committee.

At a fourth school, the team was resourceful and committed to change, but could not agree on goals. Efforts to orient new teachers and to improve the school's program of home visitation were started, but departmental chairmen blocked the team's plans to improve inter-departmental communication.

At the fifth school, the team resolved interpersonal issues but limited its ambitions to simply showing its plan to the faculty. It planned to hold a series of workshops on communication, and to help orient new teachers. The team quickly lost two members, and others never joined its efforts; when the school's chronic racial tension intensified, the team lost all its effect.

At the last school, the team could not resolve interpersonal conflicts and soon split into two opposing factions. It had planned to help orient new teachers and to bring parents and teachers together in discussion groups. In mid-year, the school's problems of racial tension, poor staff morale, and student conduct simply overwhelmed the team's efforts.

In summary, no team significantly improved its school's innovative capacity, though some teams effected isolated innovations. The most common difficulties of the team seemed to be (1) a failure to resolve interpersonal conflicts, (2) inattention to organizational restraints on change, (3) inability to manage the process of change, and (4) school situations that required more radical surgery than the teams could provide. These weaknesses will be discussed further when we compare the Institute's project with our own and with a second change-agent strategy.

teams of change agents

Goodson and Hagstrom (1971) describe the second project, a two-year planned change effort sponsored by the Research and Development Center for Cognitive Learning at the University of Wisconsin. Teams were created in five school districts to be innovative subsystems that would plan and manage change.

In 1966, the Center invited nearby school districts to participate in a project to test the effectiveness of internal teams of change agents. The consultants' theory was that the teams could introduce and stabilize change more effectively than individuals or informal groups lacking the teams' legitimacy. They thought this strategy would allow the district's staff to set their own goals, act on them, and continue to develop them after the project ended. Each team was expected to plan, introduce, and manage specific innovations and to develop and maintain an innovative climate in the district.

Team members were selected by each district, following guides for team composition set by the Center. Each team of five to eight members was to include a representative of the superintendent to give it legitimacy, power, and perspective; and each team was to represent several levels and parts of the district's hierarchy. We do not know what criteria were used by the districts to select individuals.

Three of the five participating districts chose to have their teams receive laboratory training from the Center consultants; the other two teams received no training--and soon disbanded. The Center's training theory was based on a "therapeutic model" emphasizing growth from within by a process of assimilating new information, reconceptualizing, looking toward general goals, and thinking about immediate steps toward those goals.

Team members attended a series of two-day "human development laboratories" beginning in Spring of 1967. Trainees first met in T-groups and then in exercises designed to develop interpersonal skills. They then defined and analyzed problems in their districts and collected data. They also studied current concepts in child development and school learning, problem-solving strategies, interpersonal relations, and survey data feedback. The initiative for identifying problems and setting goals passed from the Center staff to the teams as the training progressed. The teams then selected innovations to introduce into their districts according to guidelines set by the Center staff. One team chose independent study, another independent study and modular scheduling, and the third a district philosophy of education.

All of the three trained teams conducted laboratory training sessions for permanent or temporary groups in its district. The sessions emphasized interpersonal relations and problem-solving procedures and met with varying degrees of success. In the first district, of 500 professional staff, the team included five administrators, two teachers, and a school board member. The team first held a laboratory training workshop on communication, problem solving, and independent study for 20 elementary administrators and teachers. It later held a similar workshop for 40 persons.

In the second district, of 200 professional staff, a new superintendent twice changed the team's membership; the team finally consisted of the district's director of instruction, and teachers from each high school department. Only one member of the original team survived. As the team changed, it goal was changed to that of helping teachers in the district's new high school to practice innovations. It held a laboratory training workshop for the school's 100 staff members.

In the third district, of 80 professional staff, the team was twice reorganized by a new superintendent. The original team's product, the philosophy of education, alienated many older teachers. The second team tried to improve high school class formats and to introduce multi-unit elementary schools. It gave laboratory training to a combined group of high school and elementary teachers; the high school participants experienced so much conflict that their department dissolved itself soon thereafter, but the elementary teachers requested further training. The third team held a workshop for these elementary teachers, another elementary school staff that asked to be trained, and a district inservice education committee.

Data from questionnaires administered to professional staff in all five districts (three with trained subsystems and two with untrained) before and after the work of the three trained subsystems yield ambiguous results. A majority of respondents in the three experimental districts felt that the training had been valuable. However, questions about changes in morale, support for norms of openness and innovativeness, effort devoted to innovation, and teacher-principal relations provide "no evidence that either individuals or districts exposed to the interventions improved significantly more than those not exposed," according to the authors. Goodson and Hagstrom attributed the inability to show that the training was effective to the effects of turnover among administrators and teachers and to the small amount of training.

Comparisons of the Three Strategies

This section compares the Kent organizational specialists, the innovative teams described by Wolfe, and the change-agent teams described by Goodson and Hagstrom as representatives of three different strategies for changing schools. We will follow the format of our descriptive scheme and will ask questions about each outside agency's entry into the system, its conception of the role of the subsystem, the selection and training of subsystem members, the subsystem's intervention, and results of its efforts. We will also indicate our conclusions about each of these phases.

entry

If the chances of success are to be maximized, we think the initiative for change should come from the client system. Further, the outside agency and the system should understand clearly what each hopes to gain from collaboration.

In all three projects, the outside agency hopes to test its change strategy and the school system hopes to become more skillful at certain aspects of its task. In Kent, the district initiated the talks that led to the project, and CASEA did not commit itself to the project until after the district's administration had defined a list of specific goals. Our research design and intervention plans were then shaped to fit these goals. We did find, though, that this contract with the top administration did not guarantee a welcome by the particular schools and groups we worked with. Although we discussed our plans with representatives from many parts and levels of the district, we found it necessary to re-negotiate entry each time we were to work with a particular school, central-office department, or other functioning group (subsystem).

The other two projects, in contrast to Kent, began when the outside agencies invited school systems to accept their intervention. Project goals and intervention plans were formed by the consultants, who then persuaded the districts to "buy into" their goals. Wolfe notes that the Institute failed to secure an adequate understanding of its objectives and of the teams' role from the schools in which the teams were to operate; he notes, too, that commitment was low. In Goodson and Hagstrom's study, two of the three teams encountered resistance from new superintendents who did not feel bound by their predecessor's commitment to the project.

In short, a working agreement with the top administration does not guarantee that outsiders' help will be welcomed everywhere in the system. Efforts to change schools seem to be much more successful when the effort originates from the system's desire to change itself.

role of the subsystem

We think that the subsystem created to help the system adapt and change will be most effective if it is a recognized subsystem with effective channels of communication and influence to other parts of the system. We also think that the subsystem should not try to demand change of others, but should be available to increase other groups' ability to change themselves. Finally, the subsystem needs the public support of the system's decision makers and must be able to renew itself.

In neither project we compare with Kent did the teams achieve a position of legitimate, effective influence. The resistance and indifference these teams encountered, especially in Wolfe's study, seem to result from unclear expectations of the teams' function, lack of administrative support, and the school faculties' perception of the teams as trying to impose a demand that the faculties change.

In both projects we compare with Kent, the teams tried to function simultaneously in two distinct roles: as experts in the innovations they proposed and as facilitators of change. The teams described in Wolfe's study were primarily experts in the innovations they proposed, while the teams described by Goodson and Hagstrom were mainly facilitators of change. In both cases, the double role seems to have led to lack of clarity about the teams' intentions and to resistance to their efforts. The Kent cadre's legitimacy was established by the support it received from the administration, by previous CASEA events clarifying the nature of its work, and by its policy of responding to requests rather than urging its services on others. Further, the specialists do not set out to solve others' problems for them, or to impose new practices on others, or to act as experts in particular curricular or instructional innovations. Instead, the cadre made available its skills in facilitating the efforts of task groups to change or to reach goals they set for themselves.

selection of members

The cadre's effectiveness and stability

will be increased, our data indicate, if participation in it is voluntary. Applicants should come from all parts and levels of the system, and should have accurate pictures of the subsystem's goals and function. Criteria for selecting members should be empirically-tested indicators of effectiveness as a member of the subsystem (Macbeth, 1971).

The problem of selecting competent and committed subsystem members was common to all three projects. In Wolfe's study, the criteria for team members were not specifically addressed to assessing the applicant's skill as an intervener. Many applicants were unclear about the teams' role until long after the project started. In the study by Goodson and Hagstrom, criteria were specified for teams, rather than individuals, and were only partially met by the teams selected. The authors give no data on the applicants' expectations.

In Kent, previous training events conducted by CASEA gave most applicants a clear idea of the role and function of organizational specialists, though CASEA's chief problem was an inability to sort out those applicants who really wanted to become effective specialists from those who took the training chiefly for personal profit. The cadre now uses empirically-based criteria derived from Macbeth's (1971) study of effective and ineffective specialists. While all levels of the district were represented, more parts of the district should have been included. Specialists came from more than one-third of the district's schools, but nine came from a single high school.

Training. We think that neither sensitivity training nor the traditional mode of learning from books and lectures will produce effective subsystem members. Instead, the trainees should master the skills and processes of communication, problem solving, and intervening. Further, they should have the opportunity to create and carry out simulated and real interventions and to receive feedback on their performance. The outside consultants' training for subsystem members should provide a model that the trainees can adapt to their own interventions.

The two major emphases in the training in Wolfe's study were on sensitivity groups for team development and cognitive learning about particular innovations for individual competence. Very little attempt was made to encourage trainees to transfer learning from these activities to their future role. Further, the Institute's theory, which noted the importance of building effective links with the parent system and of learning the concepts and skills of the process of change, was not translated into practice. The trainees received no training in these areas. Predictably, the teams' gains and personal growth during the T-groups could not be maintained when the members were faced with the actual school situation. Since they also lacked skill in managing change, the teams could not cope with resistance or indifference to their efforts from their colleagues.

In the study by Goodson and Hagstrom, training was about equally divided between personal growth issues and intervening skills. Many of the exercises used to develop skills in communication and group processes are similar or identical to those we used with the Kent specialists. The problem-solving model that guided the teams' training and their later interventions, however, seems strong on encouraging discussion to identify problems and needs, but weak on steps to select and begin specific action plans. A strong point of the training was the gradual transfer of responsibility for setting goals from the consultants to the trainees.

Training for the Kent specialists focused on developing individual skills, team-building, and practice in interventions, with little direct attention to personal growth issues. Some specialists we interviewed said that the major defect in the training was the lack of a theoretical orientation to help them understand the training activities and to help them explain the purpose of these activities to clients.

Interventions. We think that the subsystem should not try to impose its services on others nor set out to solve others' problems. Rather, it should respond to direct requests for its services, and should involve members of the requesting group in setting goals for the intervention. Because we believe that most groups lack the skills they need to build new norms, roles, ways of making decisions, and methods for solving problems, and because we believe that a group must have these skills if it is to make wise decisions and to carry them out, we think that the most productive interventions are those that help a group acquire these skills. Finally, we think that

one cannot be an effective intervener in one's own subsystem; the confusion of roles, the inevitable misunderstanding of motives, and the actual competition among desires are too great.

In each project, the subsystem's interventions reflected the theoretical orientation and training style of the outside consultants. In Wolfe's study, the initiative always rested with the innovative teams, most of which could not cope with the resistance they encountered from colleagues. The plans of the teams in Wolfe's project are all fairly specific about the intended results of their efforts, but are seriously weak in specifying what steps were to be taken to obtain these results. Only one team devoted its main effort to improving the faculty's ability to practice innovations. In Goodson and Hagstrom's study, the initiative rested with the change agent teams, whose interventions were nearly always replications of the human development laboratories conducted by the outside consultants. Some interventions did deal with those issues we consider vital: one session of laboratory-learning was devoted mainly to clarifying the decision-making roles of faculty and administration in a new high school. However, the change agents did not seem to successfully mix content and process aspects of their dual role.

Results. We want to be able to point to specific improvements in the school system that we can attribute to the subsystem's efforts. We especially want to be able to detect these effects, and further effects, long after the outside agency has terminated its contract. Neither Wolfe nor Goodson and Hagstrom could demonstrate that their projects had achieved their objectives, while the evidence we now have on Kent supports the claim that the cadre has improved the communicative and problem-solving abilities of significant subsystems of the district.

In conclusion, we remain convinced that organizational development is a productive strategy for changing school systems in a wide range of situations, and that cadres of organizational specialists can carry on organizational development functions in a school district. In particular, we think that our strategy is more productive than those we have here compared with it.

Section 5

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Three approaches to changing school organizations are represented by the three projects described in this report. The project studied by Wolfe represents a planned-change strategy in which an innovative subsystem was expected to assess its own school's needs, prescribe remedies, and assume the initiative for carrying out its prescriptions. The subsystem's preparation included sensitivity training and study of particular innovations. The project studied by Goodson and Hagstrom represents a planned-change strategy in which innovative subsystems in school districts were to assess the system's needs, prescribe remedies, train others in the skills and processes needed to carry out the prescriptions, and then manage the change process. Preparation of the subsystem included sensitivity training, exercises to build skills in communication and problem solving, and study of certain concepts in the content and process of innovation. The Kent project represents organizational development in which a subsystem of organizational specialists was expected to carry on the functions previously performed by outside consultants and to make organizational training available to all parts of the system. The subsystem's preparation included exercises to build skills in communication, problem solving, and intervening; and practice in carrying out real and simulated interventions in consultation with the trainers.

We believe that the Kent project has been the most successful of the three projects. We have given most of our reasons for this judgement, but will summarize here the main arguments.

First, it is probably true that schools are less aware than they should be of environmental changes; they often seem incapable of responding adaptively when environmental demands for change become too persistent to be ignored. What schools need is to become open to their environments, and to become able to change as the environment changes; they do not need long-range plans that lock them into particular structures or processes that will inevitably become inappropriate to the constantly changing situation. In Kent, the cadre of organizational specialists has facilitated the district's openness to the environment in such instances as helping Springbrook to stabilize its norms for team teaching, aiding communication between school board and district officers, enhancing communication with the local education association, helping with the multi-ethnic camps for adolescents, and working with community development groups such as the Model Cities Council.

Second, subsystems such as innovative or change agent teams that presume to plan others' future for them will encounter resistance to their efforts and will have little positive impact on the system. Successful organizational change requires the commitment of those who must actually behave in the new ways; this commitment can rarely be imposed. Instead of demanding or imposing change, it seems to us much more productive to put one's effort into creating and training a subsystem that can facilitate change and train others in the skills of change when the others wish it. Most of the episodes recounted in previous pages are examples of the cadre helping groups in the district to bring new methods to bear in coping with their problems.

Third, all but the most trivial changes in curriculum or instruction have organizational consequences; to teach something new, to teach something in a new way, or to break out of the structure of "one teacher and thirty kids in one room," means interacting with others in new

ways. We can greatly increase the likelihood that new ways of interacting will be developed and that the new ways will support individual and group efforts to change if we give groups skills in communication and problem solving so that they have the tools they need to examine their current functioning, agree on new goals with commitment, and act on those commitments.

Fourth, the outside consultants' training of members of the subsystem seems to strongly shape their imagination and their perception of the objectives, targets and modes of interventions. That is, the trainees will look to their own experience for ideas and activities when they face the need to design an intervention of their own. It follows that the consultants need an adequate theory to guide their own efforts. And to set the subsystem off in the right direction, the consultants must be competent in the concepts and skills they try to impart to the subsystem's members. The consultants must, in their training design and behavior, provide a working model for the trainees.

Section 6

EPILOGUE

The information in the foregoing document was put together as the fall term, 1971-72, opened. As the manuscript finally goes to the offset press in January of 1972, we can add a few historical notes.

The new superintendent in Kent inherited a still-unbalanced budget (though one that had improved since its low point) and the usual assortment of conflicts and interpretations of difficulties, including some connected with the cadre. He informed the cadre that he would not set aside a budget for them until he had personally experienced their work and could judge their potential contributions to the district. The cadre did little during the early months of the fall term. The new superintendent then invited the cadre to perform as facilitators of communication at two important events. One was a meeting at which the superintendent wanted to gather information from employees of the school district about their discontents; it was announced as the first of a series of Communications Seminars. This meeting, attended by 58 persons, ran for an hour on the later afternoon of December 1, 1971.

The second meeting, the next day, was held to obtain information the school board could use in planning the submission of the next levy to the voters. Community leaders, citizens, teachers, students, superintendent's staff, and board members were invited. Eighty-seven persons attended. The cadre facilitated the exchange of information and desires as before.

The following item appeared in the superintendent's newsletter ("Today in the District") of December 6, 1971:

> THANKS, COMMUNICATION CONSULTANTS. A big "Thank You" to our Communication Consultants for the great job you did last week. Your services at the Communications Seminar Wednesday afternoon and at the Community Wide Special Levy meeting Thursday night were greatly appreciated and contributed immensely to the smooth functioning of both events.

The team leader, in a memo to the others of the cadre, reported: "Consultants felt that they needed to prove their abilities, and [the superintendent] felt they had proven themselves beyond a doubt." Plans were laid to continue the Communications Seminars monthly, beginning early in January.

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